



**Remarks from Dr. Florence Nakayiwa, RUFORUM Deputy Executive Secretary, Planning, Resource Mobilisation and Management during Webinar IX - Delivering Agricultural Advisory Services in the COVID-19 era. 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020**

Thank you Dr. Hlami Ngwenya, University of Free State, South Africa the Moderator for this 9<sup>th</sup> RUFORUM Webinar on the topic *Delivering Agricultural Advisory Services in the COVID-19 era*.

To our distinguished Panelists and Participants joining this Webinar you are most welcome. During the initial stages on this COVID Pandemic era, RUFORUM, a network of 128 Universities in 38 African countries explored avenues to reach out and be part of the solution for this era that has impacted all ages, professions, disciplines and countries.

The RUFORUM webinar series are part of the initiative to put our heads together and explore different perspectives and galvanise actors into collective action and response to address the effects of the pandemic.

As a network of Universities, at RUFORUM we acknowledge that the pandemic has been particularly



brutal to education in general and higher education in particular, and this is not from the health perspective. We know that all universities were closed or in some of closure as a result of COVID-19. Research processes came to a grinding halt and community engagement has been almost nonexistent, not to mention the increased incidence of inequity in access to higher education as disadvantaged communities slide further because of the lack of access to the internet and other forms of connectivity.

This webinar, the 9<sup>th</sup> in a series of 14, is exploring *delivering Agricultural Advisory Services in the COVID-19 era*. We appreciate that the agricultural sector has not been spared by COVID, moreover the pandemic came at the backdrop of desert locusts, army fall worm and floods in different parts of the African continent. How do we turn around these experiences for the benefit of the African farmer, characterized as a subsistence small holder? How can we improve production and productivity across the value chain? Noting that issues of postharvest loss and access to markets have been key challenges during this period.

As we explore how agricultural advisory services can be delivered, we draw parallels and lessons for research and community engagement for the universities.



We at RUFORUM believe that this is the opportunity for a multisectoral and multi-disciplinary dialogue to explore solutions not only for agricultural advisory services but for other aspects that will enhance agricultural services on the continent.

The panel of experts we have for this 9<sup>th</sup> Webinar is diverse and draws experience from agricultural practice, the academe and from the development world who will share their thoughts on how agricultural advisory services can be delivered in this new normal.

Thank you our panelists for agreeing to share your knowledge and experience with the participants. To all of you participants, we at RUFORUM thank you for honouring our invitation to participate in this webinar.

We look forward to hosting all of you again.

**Dr Ngwenya** we greatly appreciate your participation.

Please remember that the recordings for all Webinars are available on the RUFORUM Website.

I thank you.